



Fresh Ricotta Cheese

Leftover milk in the fridge that might go bad? Want to make lasagna for dinner but forgot to pick up ricotta cheese? This fresh cheese is incredibly simple to make, and very versatile!

Kids will get a kick out of this recipe as they see the milk transform into curds and ultimately cheese.

Yield: 2 cups ricotta

Directions:

1. Over medium-high heat, gradually warm up milk to 180-185 degrees Fahrenheit. This will take 15-20 minutes with almost constant stirring.
2. Milk burns easily, so use a wooden spoon or plastic spatula to frequently stir the milk.
3. While the milk is heating, prepare a fine strainer over a bowl. If you have cheesecloth, use this in addition to the strainer.
4. When the milk reaches 180, reduce heat to low and stir in lemon juice or vinegar.
5. Stir for 2 minutes. You will see the curds (solids) separate from the whey (liquids).
6. Turn off heat and leave pot undisturbed for 20 minutes. After 20 minutes, you will see that most of the curds have floated to the top.
7. With a ladle, spoon curds into strainer set over bowl until nothing remains in the pot.
8. Stir curds until almost all the whey has strained through into the bowl. You will want to leave enough liquid to keep the ricotta moist, but you can always stir in a few tablespoons of milk or cream if the curds look too dry.
9. Season with salt and pepper, or leave plain.
10. Allow ricotta to cool to room temperature before putting in airtight container and refrigerating. Lasts up to a week in the fridge.

Ingredients:

- 1 gallon whole milk
- 6 Tb lemon juice or white distilled vinegar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp pepper

*if using ricotta for a sweet dish like cannolis, do not season with salt and pepper

Ricotta cheese uses:

- Lasagna
- Stuffed shells
- Manicotti
- Cannoli filling
- Mix with fresh herbs for creamy dip or spread on crackers
- Stir in a spoonful of jam or honey for a sweet, protein-packed treat
- Spread on toast and drizzle with honey
- Fold into an omlette
- Use on your bagel instead of cream cheese

The sky is the limit... Ricotta is good with just about anything!

